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ABSTRACT

This paper describes a practicum that incorporated semantic mapping, "rich" context clue instruction, and teacher modeling into a 12-week instructional program for 18 Chapter 1 fourth-grade students in rural Georgia who had shown deficiency in vocabulary knowledge with standardized test scores below the 50th percentile in the second and third grades. Comparison of the pre- and posttest results indicated improved vocabulary knowledge and context clue usage. Findings suggest that, although student attitudes demonstrated a positive change, a longer implementation period is needed to make substantial gains in this area. (Three tables of data are included; 25 references and 6 appendixes--including teacher-made pre- and posttests, a sample word list, and mid-implementation tests--are attached.) (PRA)

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IMPROVING VOCABULARY SKILLS OF CHAPTER 1 FOURTH GRADE STUDENTS THROUGH SEMANTIC MAPPING TECHNIQUES

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by

Fredricia P. Hardy

A Practicum Report

Submitted to the Faculty of the Center for the Advancement of Education, Nova University, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Education Specialist

The abstract of this report may be placed in a National Database System for Reference

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ABSTRACT

Improving Vocabulary Skills of Chapter 1 Fourth Grade Students Through Semantic Mapping Techniques.
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The target population for this practicum was 18 Chapter 1 fourth grade students. These students have shown deficiency in vocabulary knowledge with standardized test scores below the 50th percentile in second and third grades. When the Vocabulary Practice Test from Scoring High on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills was administered, scores ranged from nine to 48 percent below the passing score of 70 percent. The 12-week period of instruction incorporated semantic mapping, "rich" context clue instruction, and teacher modeling. Improved vocabulary knowledge and context clue usage were documented by comparison of pre- and posttest results. Though student attitudes demonstrated a positive change, a longer implementation period was needed to make substantial gains in this area. Appendices include teacher-made pre- and posttests, a sample word list, and mid-implementation tests.

Authorship Statement

I hereby testify that this paper and the work it reports are entirely my own. When it has been necessary to draw from the work of others, published or unpublished, I have acknowledged such work in accordance with accepted scholarly and editorial practice. I give this testimony freely, out of respect for the scholarship of other professionals in the field and in the hope that my own work, presented here, will earn similar respect.

Signed: Fredricia P Hardy

Fredricia P. Hardy

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CHAPTER I

Purpose

This practicum was implemented in an elementary school located in rural, southwest Georgia. Approximately 43,000 people reside in the county with about one-half of these living in the rural/farm and nonfarm sections of the county. Agriculture is still extremely important to the economy of this county, although more industry has been attracted to the area over the past few years. Civic leaders are committed to planned growth in the areas of industry, sales, and tourism (Crutchfield, 1988).

The majority of the population is employed in blue-collar occupations in areas such as food, textile, chemical, and machinery production. In 1988, the majority of salaries fell within the low to middle income levels with the median household income being $19,577. Slightly more than 1,600 households participate in the Federal Food Stamp Program with unemployment remaining fairly steady at about 6.7 percent (Crutchfield, 1988).

As is common in many areas of Georgia, both the city and the county operate separate school systems. Within these two systems there are two high schools, two middle schools, and eight

elementary schools. A vocational facility and a special education center are supported and shared by both systems. The community college located in the county has recently been granted four-year college status affording more high school graduates the opportunity to continue education. One private school, kindergarten through twelfth grade, serves this community while also attracting students from the surrounding counties.

The elementary school where the author teaches is located within the city limits, but serves county residents who are bused into the area. Third, fourth, and fifth grade students make up the school population of 1,180 with a racial mixture of approximately 35 percent Black and 65 percent White (Pullens, 1991). Forty-three percent of the students met the federal requirements to receive free or reduced lunch (Green, 1991).

Administration within the school consists of one principal and two assistant principals. There are 63 teachers on the staff with 45 of these serving as classroom teachers. The remainder of the teaching staff is made up of physical education teachers, special education teachers, speech teachers, a music teacher, an art teacher, a librarian, and a part-time teacher for the gifted. Third grade teachers have full-time aides while fourth and fifth grade teachers receive no assistance in the classroom.

Students in regular third, fourth, and fifth grade classrooms are instructed by two teachers daily. One teacher is responsible for the language arts instruction while the other teaches math, science, and social studies. Students move from class to class at the designated time. The 483 Chapter 1 students are grouped as entire classes and receive reading instruction in a reading lab for 60 minutes a day. While in the lab, these students have the benefit of both the lab teacher and the classroom teacher. In 1990, the county purchased and implemented a computer program for Chapter 1 classes with the hope that this program would eliminate areas of deficiency. Students work in groups of seven, moving from center to center at specified times during the period. The centers include computer instruction, skill practice, direct reading instruction, and listening/browsing.

The target population for this practicum was 18 students in the author's Chapter 1 homeroom class. There were nine girls and nine boys within this group with an age range of nine to 11 years. The students were placed in Chapter 1 because they scored below the 25th percentile on the Georgia Criterion-Referenced Test (CRT). Five of the 18 students received failing grades in third grade and were "placed" in fourth grade. Twelve of the 18 students in the target class qualified for free or

reduced lunch. Parents or guardians of 11 of the students are employed as blue-collar workers with the other seven stating that they are disabled or unemployed.

Most students within this group have received little encouragement from the family to succeed in school. In many instances parents have so little education that they are unable to assist the child with assignments and even feel intimidated by the more highly-educated school staff. The majority of these parents have never been to the school for a conference and only respond to notes sent home with a signature. It seems that the responsibility for education within the family has been delegated to the mothers, since, when any contact has occurred, they have been the ones to respond to the school.

When tested for placement in reading groups for basal instruction in the computer lab, the 18 targeted students were found to function from one and one-half to two and one-half years below grade level. Previous standardized tests indicated that each of these students was deficient in vocabulary knowledge, since scores on that portion of the test were most often below grade level. Class discussions and teacher observation further substantiated the fact that the targeted Chapter 1 students needed intensive vocabulary and context clue usage instruction. Since the targeted students were found to express negative

opinions when discussing the school experience, it was determined that positive self-concepts and attitudes needed developing through instruction where success was paramount.

The author holds a master's degree in reading/language arts and has been teaching in the public school system for 19 years. After teaching music for five years, the author obtained certification in elementary education and began teaching fifth grade, with the move to fourth grade occurring seven years ago. The author is responsible for teaching language arts to a Chapter 1 class and a regular fourth grade class.

When the author began teaching Chapter 1 students for the first time two years ago it became apparent that the present method of instruction was not effective. Students were placed in these groups and never made the progress necessary to be moved out. Placement was contingent upon specific test scores.

Students in Georgia schools are required to pass the Georgia Criterion-Referenced Test (CRT) in order to be promoted to fourth grade. Even though a score of 182 to 199 on the Reading portion of the test is considered passing, it indicates eligibility for remedial education programs. Students scoring below the 25th percentile are automatically placed into Chapter 1 classes.

Chapter 1 is a federally funded program that provides services to educationally deprived children. Funds are allocated to school systems based on the number of children from low-income families residing in that system. However, services are provided to students based on educational needs rather than family income. Students served by the program are those whose educational attainment is below the level appropriate for their age and grade level. Placement in the program must be determined by scores on a standardized test (Compensatory Education Division, 1989).

While the total reading scores for all third grade students within the county have risen only minimally for 1987 through 1990, the Inferential Comprehension section of the test has improved even less (Table 1). County averages for March 1990 were 17.05 points above remedial classification and 52.95 points below a perfect score of 269. Administrators were disappointed when the 1991 system report indicated that the county totals had fallen below those attained in the last three years. The Reading Total was 2.36 points below 1990 totals and the Inferential Comprehension score was 1.03 points below 1990 totals. After making small gains, the county now seems to be moving backwards (Georgia Department of Education, 1991).

Table 1

A Comparison of Mean Third Grade CRT
Scores for 1987 through 1991
System Report

	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
Reading Total	212.02	215.03	217.89	216.05	213.69
Inferential Comp	211.29	214.70	217.62	215.84	212.81

Within the Inferential Comprehension section of the CRT, students are required to determine the meanings of words based on the context in which they are found. Interpreting these semantic relationships is very difficult for many students, particularly those performing below grade level. This fact is further verified by scores obtained on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) which is administered within the county to first through fourth grade students.

Data obtained indicates that fourth grade students have scored below the norm of 4.8 on the Vocabulary section of the ITBS for four of the last five years. Scores ranged from .1 to .2 below the norm for the years 1986 through 1989. In 1990, norm

was reached, but the Vocabulary score still remained the lowest of all scores obtained on the entire ITBS. Scores in 1991 dropped back to .2 below norm and again were the lowest of all scores obtained. County-wide administrators voiced concern over student performance on this particular subtest.

Students within the target group have scored significantly below norm when the ITBS was administered in grades two and three (Table 2). Even the two students who scored above the 50th percentile (students six and nine) in second grade had dropped to unacceptable levels by the end of third grade. Since no recent test results other than the CRT scores were available, the author administered the Vocabulary Practice Test taken from Scoring High on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (Kenneally, 1987). These are purchased materials used within the county to familiarize students with the formats and directions that appear on the actual test.

Consistent with county grading policy, 70 percent was selected as a passing score. Students' scores ranged from 22 percent to 63 percent as shown on Table 2. These scores proved to be a true representation of how the students have performed within the classroom.

Table 2

A Comparison of Grade Equivalency and Percentile Scores on Vocabulary Section of ITBS Target Population

Student Grade[c]	Second Grade[a]		Third Grade[b]		Fourth
1	22	31%	35	38%	45%
2	10	6%	13	1%	22%
3	23	35%	25	15%	49%
4	24	42%	35	38%	41%
5	13	11%	27	18%	41%
6	35	67%	32	29%	30%
7	26	46%	25	15%	59%
8	27	48%	23	12%	63%
9	29	52%	32	29%	49%
10	10	6%	30	24%	63%
11	19	22%	31	28%	56%
12	16	16%	27	18%	63%
13	18	20%	29	22%	34%
14	22	31%	27	18%	41%
15	28	50%	25	15%	30%
16	17	19%	38	48%	56%
17	19	22%	32	29%	22%
18	28	50%	23	12%	59%

[a]Second Grade mean score: 18, 50%

[b]Third Grade mean score: 28, 50%

[c]Fourth Grade passing score: 70% (Vocabulary Practice Test from Scoring High on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills)

A student's success in school is strongly related to knowledge of words. With each year of schooling, learners with a

limited vocabulary find themselves at a greater disadvantage due to an inability to comprehend the text. A student's level of vocabulary acquisition is highly predictive of that student's level of comprehension (Jenkins, Matlock, and Slocum, 1989). Davis, as cited by Toms-Bronowski (1982), analyzed nine reading comprehension subskills and determined that two of the nine, word knowledge and reasoning, accounted for 89 percent of the variation in student test scores. Other research done by Johnson, Toms-Bronowski, and Bass, as cited by Pittelman et al. (1985), suggested that word knowledge is the most important of the nine components of reading ability. Appropriate vocabulary instruction will help build word knowledge regardless of the student's ability level.

Educators agree that vocabulary instruction is an important part of any elementary classroom curriculum. Surveys indicate that the majority of educators support the teaching of vocabulary words before reading basal stories. Nearly 100 percent of teachers questioned said that they always teach vocabulary as a part of content area instruction (Johnson, Pittelman, and Heimlich, 1986).

Direct vocabulary instruction is necessary for all students, but it appears to be of particular importance for poor readers. Low ability readers frequently encounter words that they do not

know, thus impairing understanding and comprehension. Effective strategies for teaching vocabulary must be a high priority for all teachers, particularly those dealing with poor readers (Johnson, Pittelman, and Heimlich, 1986). Vocabulary instruction in these reading classes should receive special attention, since expanding word knowledge is an area where progress can be seen and measured, thus giving these students a feeling of success often lacking in other areas of schooling (Thompson and Frager, 1985).

Even though educators agree that vocabulary instruction is necessary to success in reading and subsequent success in all areas of school, present approaches to this instruction are often unsuccessful. Thelen (1986) stated that teachers believe that vocabulary is developed when students are required to look up new words in the dictionary. This activity is often meaningless and results in rote learning and rapid forgetting. Research done by Herman and Dole (1988) indicated that standard vocabulary instruction, labeled definitional, has failed to produce lasting improvement in vocabulary knowledge or in comprehension of passages containing the words covered in the instruction.

The approaches to vocabulary instruction implemented in most school settings have emphasized product over process. Vocabulary building has often been relegated to a secondary

position in the language development, and no systematic program for vocabulary building really exists (Hadaway and Florez, 1988). Students, particularly those placed in low ability groups such as the target population of Chapter 1 students, require additional vocabulary instruction to help bridge the gap between deficient backgrounds and societal standards. Methods of teaching vocabulary in these classes should be based on research findings.

The purpose of this practicum was to improve vocabulary skills among targeted Chapter 1 students. Teaching strategies implemented were expected to be more effective than those presently in use. It was also expected that the targeted students would be receptive to the new method of instruction.

Goals of the practicum were outlined in three outcome objectives. The first objective indicated that after a period of 12 weeks, 12 of the 18 targeted Chapter 1 fourth grade students who participated in a vocabulary improvement program would increase vocabulary scores by at least 20 percent as measured by the Vocabulary Skills Test (Appendix A:50). Objective number two stated that after a 12-week period of instruction, at least 12 of the 18 targeted Chapter 1 fourth grade students who participated in context clue instruction using critical thinking skills would increase scores by 15 percent as measured by the Context Clue Usage Test (Appendix B:55). The final objective

stated that after 12 weeks of implementing a vocabulary improvement program, 12 of the 18 targeted Chapter 1 fourth grade students would improve attitude scores by at least 10 percent as measured by the Attitude Inventory (Appendix C:60).

CHAPTER II

Research and Solution Strategy

Research

Within the past 10 years much research has been done on vocabulary learning and instruction. Methods researched ranged from the traditional instruction involving lists of words that students must look up in the dictionary, to the more complex semantic feature analysis. Between these two extremes can be found methods such as the instructional context approach, individualized vocabulary instruction, and semantic webbing or mapping.

Most research investigated by the author advocated methods which provide students with the opportunity to build new concepts upon old ones so that relationships and associations can be developed. Students must learn ways to organize and integrate these new concepts into preexisting structures. Johnson, as cited by Vogt (1983:9), described this technique as "... building bridges between the new and the known."

Thelen (1986) referred to Ausubel's theory of advance organizers when discussing the need for a cognitive

structure that can relate to new material. Ausubel felt that students resort to rote learning unless this cognitive structure is hierarchically organized with broad ideas at the top and smaller concepts below. This "top down" model allows students to place new information into preexisting "file folders."

Thelen (1986) stated that Ausubel listed three conditions for meaningful learning. First, the materials being introduced must be capable of being related to other information. Second, the learner's cognitive structure must contain ideas to which new material can be linked. Third, the learner must understand the need for assimilating the information in a meaningful fashion. Vocabulary instruction must be taught in conjunction with a preexisting vocabulary. Semantic mapping techniques rely on the prior knowledge of the students.

In 1985, Eeds and Cockrum completed a study comparing the effectiveness of three methods of teaching word meaning. The study was implemented in three fifth grade classes in a suburban school in a southwestern state. Three teachers rotated the teaching of each of the treatment groups daily during the two-week unit to control differential effects caused by teacher enthusiasm and ability.

After 85 target words were chosen, a multiple choice pretest was constructed and administered. Students were then

assigned to treatment groups with a random mixture of low and high achievers. The Teacher Interaction Group included instruction where the teacher helped students relate the target words to their own conceptual network. In the Dictionary Group instruction, teachers supervised students as they looked up target words and wrote definitions. A Control Group contained students supervised as they read the targeted words in the context of a novel and then completed related activities.

After 10 school days, a multiple choice posttest over the 40 words introduced was administered. The same multiple choice posttest was administered two weeks later to check for retention. Results showed that the Teacher Interaction Group had the best vocabulary retention, followed by the Dictionary Group, and finally the Control Group. Students identified as low ability assigned to the Teacher Interaction Group outperformed students identified as high ability and assigned to the other two groups. The method involving teacher interaction appeared to be highly effective for students of all levels. Students remembered more new words when teachers added direct instruction in word meaning lessons.

Vogt (1983) implemented a study to investigate the effectiveness of semantic mapping as a technique to improve recall of word meanings. This instructional strategy was compared to

the traditional method of teaching vocabulary. A population of eight intermediate level subjects (grades four, five, and six) were chosen. All of the subjects received remedial instruction in reading. A pretest, the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test, was administered to determine words that were unknown to all of the subjects.

Once the unknown words were analyzed for difficulty and compiled into groups of six, subjects were presented three of the words using the traditional technique. This technique involved looking up words in the dictionary and writing the definitions. The other three words were presented using semantic mapping, a process of constructing visual displays of categories and their relationships. Two days later, the students were tested on the recall of the word meanings.

This technique continued with the only variation being a rotation of which style of teaching was presented first. One month after the treatment, a posttest was administered. Results of the posttest indicated that the total number of word meanings remembered was greatest using the semantic mapping technique rather than the traditional technique. Vogt (1983:28) determined that the semantic mapping technique is "... a desirable strategy to help students recall word meanings and should be used to develop vocabulary to improve reading comprehension."

This study did have certain limitations. First, the small number of subjects used should have been increased to show that the results have greater reliability. Also, the subjects were exposed to the words chosen for the lists when they were pretested. This could have had an effect on the final results. Use of a control group could have also added depth to the study.

In 1982, Pittelman et al. did research which indicated that semantic mapping and semantic feature analysis were effective strategies to be used when teaching vocabulary to various populations of intermediate grade level students. Other research was carried out by the same team in 1984, and again the results substantiated the previous findings. The research which the author reviewed was completed in 1985 and was undertaken to determine whether semantic mapping was more effective for poor readers instructed in a small homogeneous group or a larger heterogeneous group. Both the 1982 and the 1984 research projects were discussed in the findings reported after the 1985 study (Pittelman et al., 1985).

Students used in the Pittelman et al. (1985) study were 11 fourth grade classrooms from eight schools in the midwestern states. Six of the 11 classes participated in the instructional treatment while the remaining classes served as the control

group, participating only in the pre- and posttest measures. Classes with the highest number of low readers, those scoring below the 40th percentile, were selected to receive the treatment. A total of 45 students were identified as the low readers who would receive the instruction.

Seven weeks prior to the treatment, a vocabulary pretest was administered to determine a baseline. A two-hour training session was held for participating teachers before they presented practice lessons to the classes. These practice lessons acquainted the students with the semantic mapping procedure.

The treatment was conducted over a three-day period. On the first day a vocabulary test was administered to the whole class. The following two days were used for one semantic mapping lesson for the entire class and one semantic mapping lesson for the small group of students identified as low readers. Project staff members observed each lesson and recorded the number of times students participated and confirmed that the teachers followed the prescribed lesson plan.

The 24-item vocabulary test, which had been administered seven weeks before the treatment, was administered again one and a half weeks following the completion of the treatment. A comparison of test performance reaffirmed the effectiveness of semantic mapping as an instructional technique. The poor

readers in this study were learning new words equally well whether receiving small or large group instruction. Pittelman et al. (1985:34) concluded that teachers using semantic mapping instruction "... can rest assured that the poorer readers will learn through this approach." Semantic mapping will benefit all reading ability groups.

In order to lend more validity to the results obtained, researchers should have used a different posttest rather than reusing the pretest. Students may have become "test-wise" and some of the improvement shown on the posttest could have resulted from the previous experience with the pretest. The researchers did attempt to eliminate this extraneous variable by administering the pretest seven weeks before the study started and waiting one and a half weeks after the study was completed to administer the posttest.

An extensive research study on the effectiveness of semantic mapping and semantic feature analysis done by Toms-Bronowski (1982) further substantiated the fact that both of these strategies are superior to the instructional context approach. However, the context treatment groups did significantly outperform the other treatment groups on the test that reflected their treatment, i.e., defining words using context. These results tend to imply that a program of instruction featuring

semantic mapping and feature analysis, as well as the instructional context approach, might be even more effective.

Beck (1984), in a paper presented at the American Educational Research Association, discussed what is entitled "fertile" instruction. The original study was done with fourth grade students, 79 percent of whom were below the 50th percentile on standardized tests in reading comprehension and vocabulary. Words were presented in semantic groups of 8 to 10 with activities growing more challenging. A great deal of discussion and interaction was encouraged in a whole class setting. This type of instruction is particularly important for less-skilled readers, because the habits and reading environment of these children are less likely to result in high levels of verbal performance.

A study done by McKeown et al. (1985) described a special instructional context approach which did prove to be more effective than traditional methods. Subjects for the study were fourth grade students in four classrooms located in a lower socioeconomic neighborhood. Three classrooms served as experimental while the fourth was the control group. The instruction was designed to teach 24 difficult words taken from basal reading programs of intermediate grades. Each set of words was presented in a seven-day cycle which included testing.

Three types of instruction were employed during the study. "Rich" instruction allowed students to explore aspects of word meaning by identifying relationships between words as well as applying them in various contexts. "Extended/Rich" instruction consisted of "Rich" instruction combined with activities to promote students' use of words outside of class. "Traditional" instruction required students to make simple associations between words and definitions.

Findings indicated that all types of instruction were better than no instruction. The "Rich" and "Extended/Rich" methods were superior to the "Traditional" method. More encounters with the words yielded better results than fewer encounters.

Other studies by McKeown (1985), Ryder (1986), and the Oregon State Department of Education (1989) advocated an instructional technique called "teacher modeling" when teaching students to derive meaning from context. The teacher is instructed to direct the students' attention to salient clues and talk through the process used to find adjacent words which give meaning to the unknown word. Underlining can call attention to key words and phrases. This demonstration of the use of context will help students understand how to compile information about the word's meaning through deductive reasoning and critical thinking. Students also must be taught to decide if there is

enough information available from the context or if a dictionary must be consulted.

Solution Strategy

The practicum author determined from the research studied that an instructional method based on semantic mapping would be most plausible for the target group chosen. Context clue instruction through teacher modeling would afford students an additional strategy for enhancing text comprehension. In addition to the research cited previously, the author found other studies which praised the use of this technique with students of all ability levels.

Stahl and Fairbanks (1986) reviewed 52 vocabulary improvement studies implemented with students of varying ages and abilities. These studies indicated that certain methods of vocabulary instruction improved reading comprehension and scores on standardized tests. The successful teaching methods included a balanced emphasis between contextual and definitional information. "Deep" processing activities such as semantic mapping and creative writing helped students make connections between new words and what is already known. This research indicated that the third factor important for vocabulary

instruction was providing students with multiple exposures to the new words in different texts and settings.

Kolich (1988) compared research findings pertaining to vocabulary learning dated from 1938 through 1984. Conclusions drawn from this extensive study indicated that the most effective approach to vocabulary instruction is one that provides diverse strategies such as semantic mapping, identification of synonyms and antonyms, and analyzation of context. This mixed approach allows learners to select and utilize information relevant to prior knowledge brought to the instructional setting. Educators using this approach have a better chance of reaching students of varying abilities such as those found in the regular classroom.

Students deficient in reading skills have made dramatic gains when taught difficult vocabulary words through a system of linking new concepts with prior knowledge. This instruction fosters interaction beyond simple memorization. The words taught during the implementation period were grouped according to specific topics taken from stories within the basal series.

Integrated within the semantic mapping strategy were frequent exposures to the vocabulary through "rich" context instruction. This technique carried each group of related words through a five-day cycle with students keeping a logbook beginning on day one. Since the author believed that teacher

modeling was a valuable technique, it was employed to give students a guide when approaching an unknown word in a text.

The author was confident that vocabulary scores for the Chapter 1 target group would increase when the instructional strategies discussed were consistently implemented over a 12-week period. The ability to infer meaning from context were strengthened through teacher modeling. In addition, the author expected students' attitudes toward reading instruction to improve as individual success was achieved through these techniques.

CHAPTER III

Method

The goal of this practicum was that over a period of 12 weeks, a group of 18 students in a Chapter 1 fourth grade class would improve vocabulary knowledge. Methods employed included semantic mapping, context clue instruction, and teacher modeling. The class spent an average of 30 minutes a day completing the planned activities. Most of the instruction was whole group, with some small-group activities where appropriate.

The author of the practicum is a classroom teacher responsible for language arts instruction for a Chapter 1 fourth grade class and a regular fourth grade class. Implementation of the teaching strategies was the task of the author and took place in the class of Chapter 1 students. It was the author's responsibility to plan and sequence the lessons, gather materials, and direct the lessons. The author administered, scored, and interpreted the data from the pre- and posttests, as well as made mid-course adjustments. The school librarian was asked to give suggestions about materials available within the media center. As coordinator of instruction for the school, the assistant principal

monitored the instruction by first reading the practicum proposal and then making periodic classroom visits during implementation.

Within a regular classroom the author would include much of the vocabulary development during the period of time allocated for reading instruction. Since the target group received reading in a highly-structured computer lab program and moved to another teacher for half the school day, it was necessary to complete the activities during the time normally used for other language arts subjects. Because the traditional curriculum had to be revised, and on some days completely rearranged to allow time for this implementation, the author informed the school administration about the special program being implemented. No problems occurred in this area since the new assistant principal encourages innovation, served as mentor for this practicum, and gave permission for the instruction to be undertaken.

During the first week of the implementation, introductory activities were completed. A class discussion on the value of reading was held. Students told how they felt about reading both during instruction and as a leisure activity. Students were encouraged to be the best readers possible. Two teacher-made tests entitled the Vocabulary Skills Test (Appendix A:50), and the Context Clue Usage Test (Appendix B:55), as well as an

Attitude Inventory (Appendix C:60), were administered and scored to obtain pretest baseline information.

The Vocabulary Skills Test was teacher-made and designed from the list of vocabulary words featured in the actual study. This type of definitional word-specific measure was constructed in order to determine if the specific vocabulary words taught were actually learned. The instruction used during this implementation did not teach a global strategy, but rather, a designated list of words. The test consisted of 25 multiple choice items which included a three-word phrase containing a vocabulary word and four possible answers from which to choose. Students recorded a choice of the correct synonym by underlining.

The Context Clue Usage Test was developed by the author to determine the ability of students to use context clues. Each test item was constructed to contain an unknown word and a synonym of that word. Students circled a context clue (i.e. the synonym) within each short passage. The test was designed to be a global vocabulary measure and did not contain the specific words taught during the weeks of implementation.

The Attitude Inventory was an adaptation of the Reading Attitude Inventory designed for Silver Burdett and Ginn (Campbell, 1991). Students indicate feelings about various questions by putting a mark on one of five pictures. Scores

were assigned by allotting points to each picture and determining a total.

Semantic mapping techniques were discussed, with rules for class participation being established. These rules had to do with respecting others and their responses and were printed on a wall chart. Students practiced making simple semantic maps on subjects such as self, family, and school. The teacher explained that topics for the weekly maps were taken from the basal reader. Logbooks were assigned and their use was explained. Students were encouraged to use the words outside of class to become a "Word Wizard." Points could be earned by finding the words in printed context, using the words in conversation, or hearing the words in another place other than school.

Week two began with the teacher reading a simple book about "Whales," the topic of the week. Students participated in brainstorming activities by constructing a semantic map with the teacher interjecting the 10 new vocabulary words as the map progressed (Appendix D:68). Students were asked to group all the words in the map into categories of their own choice. A discussion of the groupings followed. The feature words were then copied into the students' logbooks and a definition given for each one. Students were given paper and crayons to create a picture of a whale in its natural environment. They were

encouraged to represent as many of the vocabulary words as possible. The teacher had composed a paragraph including "rich" context (i.e. synonyms of the words included in the text) and demonstrated how to use context to determine the meaning of words in a paragraph through teacher modeling. Creative writing was introduced at the end of the week when students were asked to write an article about whales including as many of the vocabulary words as they could. After being divided into groups of three, the students read the articles orally to the group. A posttest on the week's words was administered as the last activity.

During week three the topic was "Magic." Again, the teacher used a short book as the introduction. A semantic map was constructed and feature words were written in the logbooks. Students also completed a cloze activity worksheet, and the entire class competed in a game in which the teacher gave the definition and the student gave the word. Words from weeks two and three were included. Teacher modeling of the use of context clues was again demonstrated. Students were reminded to become "Word Wizards" by looking for the feature words when not at school. For creative writing using the vocabulary words, students wrote about a magic show that they had seen. They were encouraged

to use as many of the feature words as possible. Five of the students were able to use all 10 feature words. They read orally and received a sticker. A posttest was administered.

The topic for week four was "Robots." A short book on robots was used as an advance organizer. Students were then led in the construction of the semantic map with the 10 feature words being interjected at intervals. Topic words were copied into the logbooks and defined. Students were again reminded of "Word Wizard" and encouraged to earn points and a prize. Working in groups of four, students created a unique robot using crayons and paper. The writing assignment for the week consisted of describing the robot drawn while in groups and telling what jobs the robot could do. Individual stories were typed while in the computer lab. Students traded computers and listened to other stories written by classmates. Each student heard at least two other stories during the lab periods involved. This activity extended over portions of weeks four and five. A cloze procedure story was written by the author. Students completed this activity by inserting the appropriate feature words. Context clue usage was practiced using sentences containing "rich" context. The author used one color marker to highlight clues and another color to indicate the synonym in each

sentence. A posttest on the week's words was administered as the last activity.

"Animal Camouflage" was used as the topic of week five because it corresponded with the science chapter being covered at the time. The science teacher reinforced this week's lesson by using the feature words during science discussions. The author began the week by reading two books on the subject. Interesting pictures fostered a lengthy discussion before the semantic map was constructed. Students were asked to brainstorm in order to create a list of animals which they might think of when they heard each of the feature words. Words were defined and listed in logbooks. For variety, context clue instruction consisted of a worksheet which students completed individually and then checked during class discussion. Colored markers were used by each student to mark clues and synonyms in the manner demonstrated by the teacher. As an incentive to remember all the words, students participated in the game "Around the World." Two students competed by attempting to be the first to say the correct word after the teacher had read the definition. The winner moved on to challenge the next classmate. The object of the game is to either go "Around the World" (the class) or defeat the most classmates. The winner received a prize. This game fostered noise and confusion as well as a great deal of

enthusiasm. As a creative writing activity, students chose an appropriate animal and wrote about that animal's camouflage. Some of the stories were shared orally. A weekly posttest was administered on the last day of the week.

During week six the topic studied was "Snakes." This was a favorite of the students since, not only were they naturally intrigued by the subject, but they were able to study this topic during the week that Okefenokee Joe and his collections of live snakes visited the campus. Okefenokee Joe gave an hour-long demonstration which served as the introduction to the topic. Construction of the semantic map had to be terminated before students were finished discussing due to time restraints. Logbooks were completed along with a worksheet which required matching of definitions with words. Context clue instruction was again done with the whole group using a chart and colored markers. As a critical thinking activity, students worked in groups of six to brainstorm lists of ways that snakes are harmful and helpful. Students then wrote two paragraphs using ideas from the lists.

Due to the fact that week six was the middle of the implementation period, mid-course tests were administered to determine the amount of progress made. The Mid-Implementation Vocabulary Test (Appendix E:70) was a matching test composed of

20 of the words taught thus far. Scores on this test ranged from 30 to 100 percent with eight of the 18 scores falling below 70 percent. The Mid-Implementation Context Clue Test (Appendix F:73) consisted of 10 sentence passages which contained an underlined word and a synonym of that word. Students were required to circle the synonym. Scores ranged from 40 to 90 percent with 10 of the targeted students scoring below 70 percent. To determine if improvement in attitudes had occurred, the author used a class discussion and teacher observation. It was apparent that students were positive in response to the vocabulary study, but this attitude had not carried over into day-to-day reading instruction.

Adjustments in the teaching strategy were made due to the number of failing scores on the mid-course tests. A speaker was invited to serve as the advance organizer for one of the weeks. Since games seemed to encourage more enthusiasm for the learning and understanding of words, the author determined that playing at least one weekly was a vital addition to the implementation. Another game entitled "VOCAB-O" was developed by the author. A game card similar to "BINGO" was printed containing 24 vocabulary words. Winners of either game received a prize. Students who included all 10 of the week's words in creative writing lessons were given a sticker to display on logbooks.

Students made flash-cards to use for studying at home. This activity involved parents in the lessons and allowed students to "show off" newly acquired knowledge. Treats were given to students making 100 percent on the weekly posttests.

Discussions with the reading lab teacher led to the inclusion of context clue instruction on the computer during lab time. This further practice in a different medium added depth to this portion of the implementation. The lessons used were part of the "Reading for Meaning" section of the IBM program Teaching and Learning with Computers (1988).

No amount of encouragement prompted students to look for the featured words in situations other than the school setting. This was probably due to the fact that few of these students have access to newspapers and magazines at home. Therefore, the "Word Wizard" portion of the implementation strategy was eliminated after the sixth week.

"Outerspace" was the topic for week seven. After the initial introduction by reading a library book, activities included constructing a semantic map, completing individual logbooks, group and computer context clue instruction, and playing "Around the World." Creative writing was encouraged by having students imagine that they were lost in space. After making a jot list of items necessary for survival, the students wrote about the

adventure. A posttest was administered and treats were awarded.

The topic for week eight, "the Old West," was moved from another week because of the opportunity to have a speaker introduce the study. An authority on the history of Indians spoke to the class. The information presented built the framework for the construction of the semantic map. Again, logbooks were completed, context clue instruction involved teacher modeling and computers, a cloze activity worksheet was included, and the game "VOCAB-O" was played.

Since the last story typed on the computers took far more time than expected and interfered with lab activities, the author decided that a group creative writing activity would be more successful. The whole class wrote a story about living in the Old West, the story was copied, and everyone typed this story on the computer. This allowed faster students to be of help to those who were having trouble. Typing and correcting were completed in two days.

During week nine the topic of study was "Ants." Before the semantic map was constructed, a book on ants was read. The semantic map and logbooks were completed with words and definitions listed. One day of computer context clue usage was included as well as whole group practice. An ant farm was

brought to class by one of the students and produced a class discussion which led directly into creative writing. Students wrote about life in an ant colony. "Around the World" was played and the posttest was administered.

"Sharks," the topic for week 10 was very popular with the students. After the introductory book was read, the class discussion was lengthy. Activities for the week included a semantic map, logbooks, context clue instruction, flash-cards for use at home, and a game. Creative writing began with students imagining the surroundings in a shark's world and "becoming" a shark. Students were divided into groups so that each could read orally. The posttest was administered as the last activity.

The topic for the final group of words introduced was "Thanksgiving." After the reading of a library book, the semantic map was developed. Before placing the feature words into logbooks, students worked with a partner to classify all words from the map into appropriate groups. The social studies teacher participated in the study by allowing students to complete a class Thanksgiving mural. Context clue instruction was accomplished with both chart and computer. For creative writing, students were asked to compare life today with the life of the Pilgrims.

"Around the World" was played and the posttest completed.

Week 12 included a review of all of the words taught using flash-cards, "VOCAB-O," and "Around the World." Students were given the opportunity to evaluate the 12-week program. They were asked to tell what they liked and disliked about this vocabulary study. The author waited until the following week to administer the posttests which were the Vocabulary Skills Test (Appendix A:50), the Context Clue Usage Test (Appendix B:55), and the Attitude Inventory (Appendix C:60). Initially these same tests had been used as pretests to obtain baseline data. After scoring was completed, comparisons were made between pre- and posttest scores to determine if the goals of the outcome objectives for the practicum had been met.

CHAPTER IV

Results

At the conclusion of the 12-week implementation period posttests were administered. The three instruments used were identical to the pretest measures. Scores were determined by hand scoring and comparisons of pre- and posttest data indicated the degree of improvement.

The major objective of this practicum was to improve vocabulary scores among the targeted Chapter 1 students. After 12 weeks of systematic instruction including semantic mapping, context instruction, and teacher modeling, 18 of the 18 targeted population increased vocabulary scores by at least 20 percent as measured by the Vocabulary Skills Test (Appendix A:50). Improvement far exceeded the author's expectations with all students showing increases in posttest scores. Student number eight showed the least growth, possibly due to the fact that the student had the highest pretest score and made 100 percent on the posttest. Students 5, 6, 11, 12, and 15 increased vocabulary scores by more than 60 percent (Table 3).

Table 3

A Comparison of Pre- and Posttest Results:
Vocabulary Skills Test,
Context Clue Usage Test,
Attitude Inventory

Student	Vocabulary Test		Context Clue Test		Attitude Inventory	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
1	48%	88%	48%	92%	67%	77%
2	24%	64%	40%	56%	71%	93%
3	40%	84%	64%	96%	67%	70%
4	60%	96%	76%	92%	77%	83%
5	24%	84%	26%	52%	77%	78%
6	28%	92%	52%	88%	62%	64%
7	44%	88%	84%	96%	51%	74%
8	72%	100%	92%	84%	65%	78%
9	40%	92%	88%	88%	74%	90%
10	48%	100%	52%	80%	86%	95%
11	28%	96%	52%	60%	68%	79%
12	32%	96%	60%	96%	68%	86%
13	32%	84%	68%	88%	79%	90%
14	40%	92%	36%	72%	92%	86%
15	32%	96%	32%	88%	78%	53%
16	48%	100%	80%	92%	56%	82%
17	16%	56%	32%	52%	63%	87%
18	40%	96%	76%	88%	72%	81%

The second objective of this practicum was to improve the ability of the targeted Chapter 1 students to use context clues to determine the meanings of unknown words. After 12 weeks of instruction, 12 of the 18 targeted population did increase scores

by at least 15 percent as measured by the Context Clue Usage Test (Appendix B:55). This objective was met but not exceeded (Table 3). The use of context clues to determine word meaning is a difficult skill to develop. Teacher modeling proved to be an effective technique which would produce more deductive reasoning when used over a longer period of time.

The third objective of this practicum was to improve the attitude of the targeted Chapter 1 students through systematic instruction, positive reinforcement, and opportunities for success within the classroom. After 12 weeks of instruction, 10 of the 18 targeted population increased attitude scores by at least 10 percent as measured by the Attitude Inventory (Appendix C:60). Since the outcome objective stated originally indicated an expected 10 percent increase in 12 of the scores, this objective was not met. Sixteen of the students did show attitude improvement according to test scores, but the increase for six of these ranged from one to nine percent (Table 3). The author determined that the short implementation period was not sufficient time to change attitudes to any great degree. Due to the fact that these students have had little success during previous years of schooling, it will require long-range positive experiences to reverse negative attitudes toward reading and instruction.

In conclusion, two of the three outcome objectives stated before implementation were achieved. Semantic mapping techniques and context clue instruction through teacher modeling proved to be successful. Attitude improvement was accomplished but not to the degree desired. This was possibly due to the need for a longer period of implementation in order to change ideas instilled over several years.

CHAPTER V

Recommendations

After the practicum implementation period, the author had data which substantiated the effectiveness of the instructional techniques used for improving vocabulary knowledge and context clue usage. Methods employed were not restrictive and were easily modified to adapt to the classroom situation. The flexibility of each aspect of the instruction allowed changes to be made without disruption of the learning environment.

Due to the success shown by the posttest scores, the author has begun using similar techniques with the regular fourth grade class taught daily. Even though these students are functioning on fourth grade level, scores on the ITBS were lowest on the vocabulary section thus indicating a need of vocabulary instruction. With this group, movement through each step of the instruction has been more rapid and positive results have been seen quickly.

The research and findings of the practicum have been shared with other teachers during grade-level meetings at the author's school. Two teachers have visited and observed during

the teaching of a lesson. The author has also volunteered to demonstrate the technique in other classrooms within the school.

Because the author would like to receive students in future classes that have benefitted from this research, the practicum results have also been made available to the lower elementary grades housed in another school plant. The author will serve as a resource person and be available to answer questions if any arise. As other teachers use the techniques advocated in this practicum, these teachers will be encouraged to give input as to improvements which should be implemented in order to make the model even more successful.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Vocabulary Skills Test

Appendix A

Vocabulary Skills Test

Read the phrase in each exercise below. Find the answer that means almost the same as the underlined word. Mark your answer by underlining.

1. a nation's boundary
   a. people
   b. houses
   c. border
   d. leader
2. those brilliant colors
   a. bright
   b. soft
   c. dark
   d. mixed
3. a vicious animal
   a. loving
   b. quiet
   c. sleepy
   d. mean
4. a snug house
   a. brick
   b. comfortable
   c. large
   d. dirty
5. to explore outerspace
   a. write about
   b. fill up
   c. follow
   d. look around
6. a pleasant meal
   a. enjoyable
   b. large
   c. square
   d. future

7. annoying other people
   a. inviting
   b. calling
   c. bothering
   d. counting
8. the enormous tree
   a. leafless
   b. large
   c. green
   d. young
9. the essential parts
   a. useless
   b. loose
   c. heavy
   d. necessary
10. designed the car
   a. drove
   b. cleaned
   c. bought
   d. planned
11. a remote area
   a. faraway
   d. crowded
   c. grassy
   d. safe
12. nuggets were found
   a. bodies of water
   b. large presents
   c. sheets of glass
   d. lumps of rock
13. sections of oranges
   a. juice
   b. parts
   c. peelings
   d. smells

14. reveal the answer
    a. figure out
    b. know
    c. ask
    d. tell
15. live in burrows
    a. large grass houses
    b. nests in the trees
    c. holes in the ground
    d. spaces in the wall
16. it was bellowing
    a. roaring
    b. whispering
    c. hoping
    d. marching
17. end the trance
    a. lesson
    b. class
    c. trial
    d. spell
18. a modern painting
    a. expensive
    b. up-to-date
    c. tiny
    d. wall-size
19. he felt panic
    a. fear
    b. happiness
    c. loneliness
    d. cold
20. the slanted board
    a. rotten
    b. leaning
    c. painted
    d. wooden

21. disguise his face
    a. wash
    b. shave
    c. change
    d. slap
22. nourish the child
    a. punish
    b. love
    c. carry
    d. feed
23. took a voyage
    a. trip
    b. dollar
    c. pill
    d. pencil
24. heckle the player
    a. cheer for
    b. make fun of
    c. send mail to
    d. smile at
25. wires will vibrate
    a. break when pulled forward
    b. hold the heavy picture
    c. block the mail door
    d. move back and forth quickly

Appendix B

Context Clue Usage Test

Appendix B

Context Clue Test

Read each item below. Notice that one word is underlined. Circle one other word in the sentences that helps you understand the meaning of the underlined word.

1. Pat and Pam debated over what to have for lunch. They argued for over an hour until Mother made them stop the fussing.

2. Billy tried not to quaver when he passed the barking dogs. He did not want them to see him shaking.

3. Cuba is in a hot region of the world. It is located in a place where the sun's rays are strong.

4. Terry's weekly earnings are more now because his boss gave him a raise in his pay. He is very happy.

5. Our dog will not consume his food if we are watching. We must go into the house so he will eat.

6. The man sang a popular ballad. It was a song about a boy and dog that got lost in the woods.

7. Find the solution to the math problem. Write your answer on the blank at the side of the paper.

8. Mr. Brown promised to construct the birdhouse for us. We asked him to build it out of pine but he used oak.

9. She made the dress out of a very colorful fabric. The cloth was made of cotton and was pink and green.

10 The doctor said that Paul's arm was fractured. A cast was put on it because it was broken in two places.

11. Since the trip will take more than a week, they planned their journey for next May. I hope they have a good time.

12. Maxie observed the snake from the barn while Beth watched from the house. No one wanted to get near it.

13. The children could not capture the cat so they asked their teacher to help them catch it.

14. Fred adored frogs. In fact, he loved them more than anything.

15. Sam's mother was very angry. He had never seen her so irate.

16. Mother Beaver is instructing her sons. She wants them to know how to cut down trees. She teaches them to do this.

17. Until Matt was seven, he thought there were only two kinds of cheese. Then his aunt let him taste other varieties.

18. All of Sammy's friends were amazed at his changes. They were so surprised when he was nice to his sister.

19. Sally's dad has hired a tutor for her. This teacher will help her with math and language.

20. Putter was a plucky little boat. He was so brave that he was not afraid of anything.

21. Paul's parents are concerned about him. He has told them not to worry because he is feeling fine.

22. The whole family was famished. No one had any lunch, and they had been hungry for hours.

23. He was astonished when it snowed in July. That change in weather would surprise anyone.

24. The boys want to build a treehouse. They will all be exhausted at the end of the day. All that work will make them tired.

25. Mark loved to fly a kite. He watched it drift across the sky. He was sad when he saw the string break and the kite float away.

Appendix C

Attitude Inventory

Appendix C

Attitude Inventory

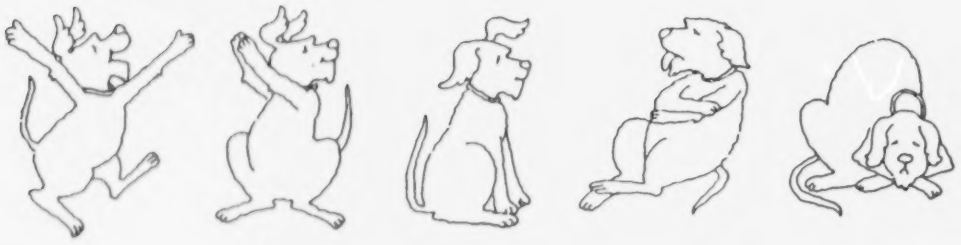
Put an "X" on the figure that best show how you feel about each statement below. REMEMBER: THERE IS NO "RIGHT" OR "WRONG" ANSWER!

1. Reading is an important part of my life.

2. How do you feel when your teacher reads a story?

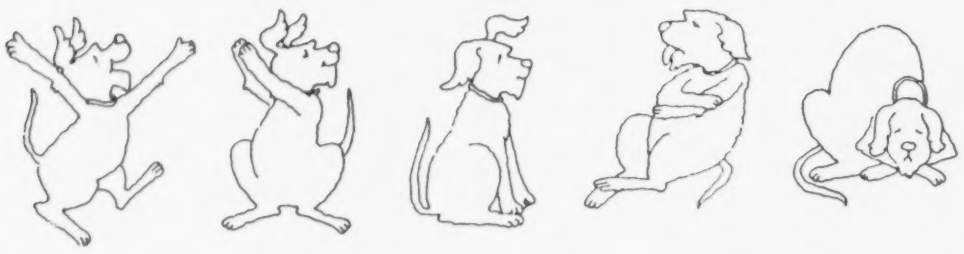
Campbell, Paul. "Reading Attitude Inventory." Idea Factory for Teachers: Dream Chasers, Morristown, N.J.: Silver, Burdett, and Ginn, Inc., 1991.

3. How do you feel when someone gives you a book for a present?

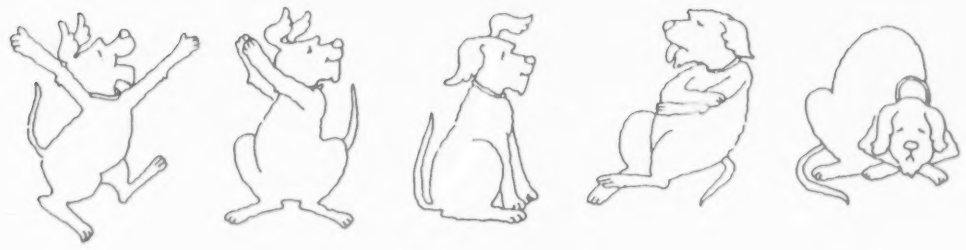


4. I want to be a better reader.

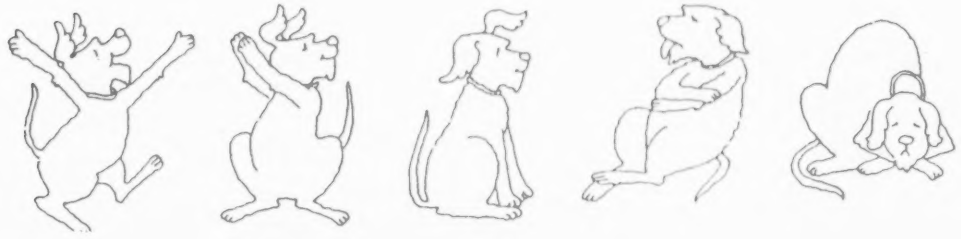
5. I think that being a good reader is important.



6. How do you feel about reading books for fun at home?

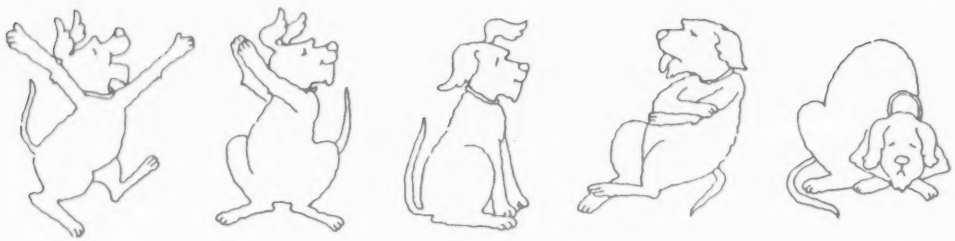


7. If I don't understand what I've read, I try another way of reading the story.

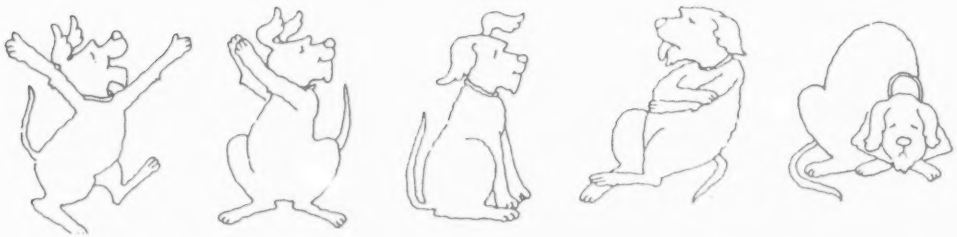


8. How do you feel when you are asked to read out loud to your group?

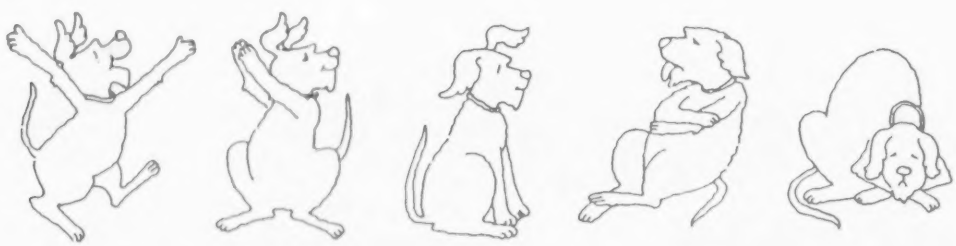
9. How do you feel about creative writing?



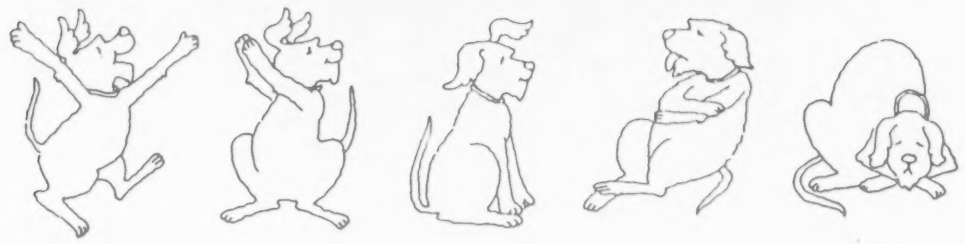
10. Do you like to write about what you read?



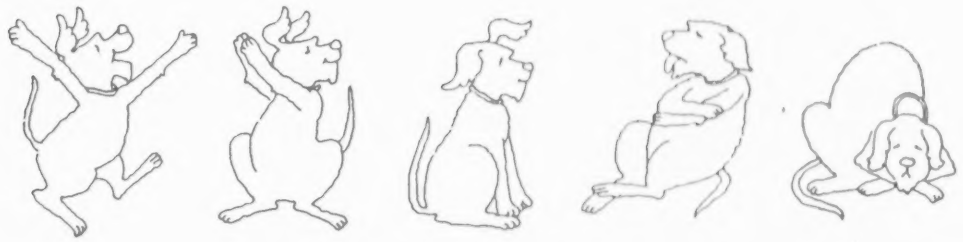
11. Learning the meanings of new words will make me a better reader.



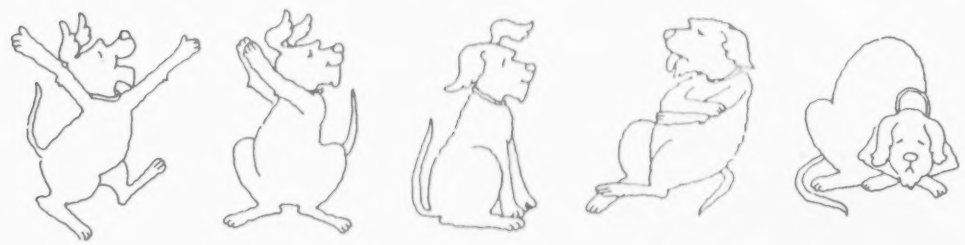
12. I have a good plan for figuring out the meanings of new words.



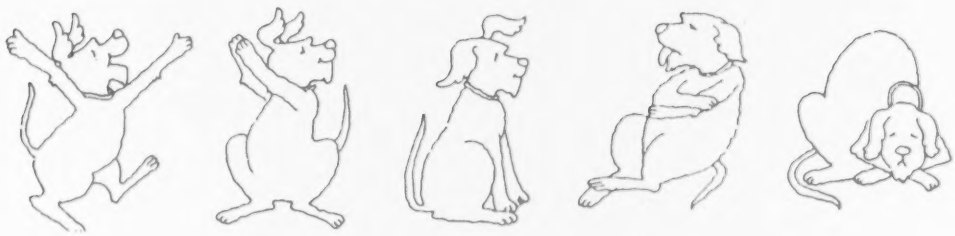
13. My teacher has taught me a way to figure out the meanings of new words.



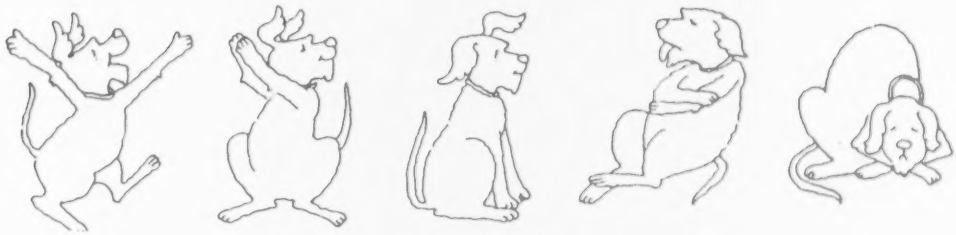
14. If I knew more of the words I would understand better.



15. How do you feel when you come to a new word while reading?

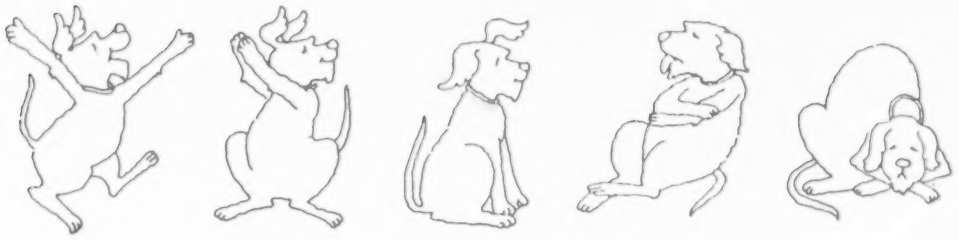


16. How do you feel about how well you read?

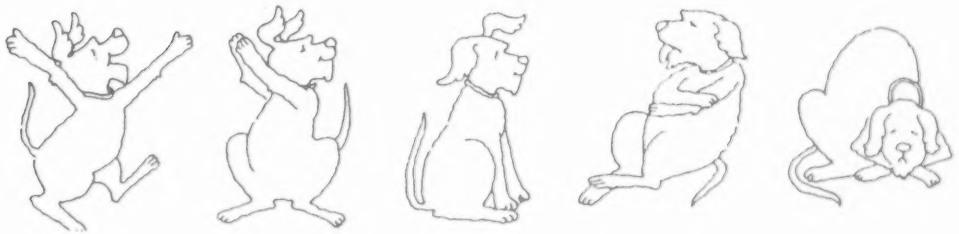


17. I usually understand what I read.

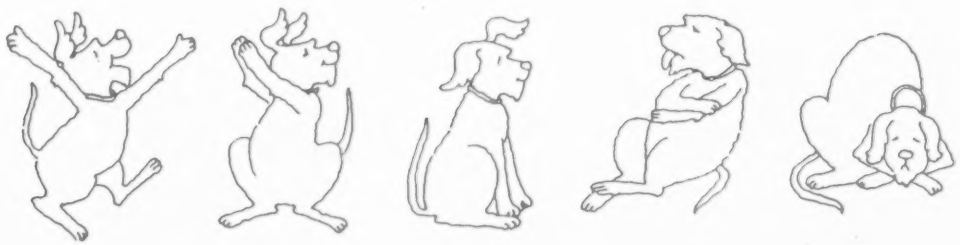
18. How do you feel about the reading group that you are in?



19. I think that good readers always know all of the words.



20. How do you think you'll feel about reading when you're older?



Appendix D

Sample Word List

During weeks 2 through 11 of the implementation, a new list of 10 vocabulary words was introduced weekly through semantic mapping techniques. "Whales" was the topic for the second week of implementation. The list of words included was used during week two, and is representative of the other lists introduced during the subsequent weeks.

Appendix D

Sample Word List

1. mammal
2. enormous
3. blubber
4. endangered
5. surface
6. stranded
7. bellowing
8. ton
9. harpoon
10. nourish

Appendix E

Mid-Implementation Vocabulary Test

Appendix E

Mid-Implementation Vocabulary Test

Match the definition with the vocabulary word. Write the letter of the definition on the line.

_____ 1.	mammal	a. careful
_____ 2.	endangered	b. to give food to
_____ 3.	stranded	c. amazing, hard to believe
_____ 4.	harpoon	d. to change in order to hide
_____ 5.	nourish	e. to amaze, to confuse
_____ 6.	dazzle	f. make things disappear
_____ 7.	gimmick	g. not many left
_____ 8.	props	h. imitate, to act like
_____ 9.	palm	i. to draw, make the first drawing
____ 10.	reveal	j. a trick
____ 11.	essential	k. able to be moved
____ 12.	designed	l. to show something that's hidden
____ 13.	industry	m. animal that gives birth
____ 14.	remarkable	n. gets your attention
____ 15.	mobile	o. building things in factories
____ 16.	disguise	p. things used by a magician

____	17.	alert	q. something needed or necessary
____	18.	mimic	r. a spear used to kill animals
____	19.	cautious	s. always watching, prepared
____	20.	striking	t. to run up on the ground and cannot get off

Appendix F

Mid-Implementation Context Clue Test

Appendix F

Mid-Implementation Context Clue Test

Circle a word which has the same meaning as the underlined word.

1. After losing, Bill resolved to practice more. He promised to spend 30 minutes a day kicking the ball.

2. The kitten quivered and shook in the cold air.

3. Mom said the bird was a nuisance. He was always a bother to everyone in the family.

4. Water gushed out of the rocks and poured down the mountain.

5. It was fun to create the doll. They decided to make it out of an old sock.

6. Don't wander off. You may walk into a low branch.

7. Without enough food, the animals face starvation and death.

8. He replaced his wet shoes with a warm pair of mukluks.

9. The cut on the dog's foot was large so the vet sewed up the wound.

10. Bob was afraid that the sick hamster would perish. After taking the medicine it did not die.